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LAW MANUSCRIPTS FROM FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ICELAND*

RIGHTFULLY NOTED as an overlooked period of medieval Icelandic law manuscript production, the fifteenth century nevertheless holds a significant number of codices and fragments containing *Jónsbók* and *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar* – two important vernacular legal codes dealing with secular and ecclesiastical matters in medieval Iceland. Perhaps due to the large number of illuminated manuscripts produced during the “Golden Age” of Icelandic book production in the fourteenth century,¹ and the arrival and devastating consequences for the clergy of the first wave of the Black Death in 1402–04,² the fifteenth century has been interpreted as a period of scriptural and orthographic stillstand.³ Simultaneously, it was a period of decline in the quality and quantity of book painting in Iceland.⁴

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- 1 For the book design and number of Icelandic manuscripts produced in the Middle Ages, see Már Jónsson, “Manuscript Design in Medieval Iceland,” *From Nature to Script: Reykholt, Environment, Centre, and Manuscript Making*, eds. Helgi Þorláksson and Þóra Björg Sigurðardóttir (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2012), 231–43. For an overview of book paintings in Icelandic manuscripts, see Halldór Hermannsson, Introduction to *Icelandic Illuminated Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Halldór Hermannsson (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1935), 7–28.
- 2 According to Gunnar Karlsson and Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, “Plágurnar miklu á Íslandi,” *Saga* 32 (1994): 19, 86 per cent of the Icelandic clergy died in 1402–04. The second wave of the Plague arrived in Iceland in 1494–95 but had less impact on its population than the first.
- 3 Stefán Karlsson, “The Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, 1, ed. Oskar Bandle (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 836.
- 4 Halldór Hermannsson, Introduction to *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Jónsbók*, ed. Halldór Hermannsson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940), 14–15. See also Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum,” *Kirkja og kirkjuskruð: Miðaldakirkjan í Noregi og á Íslandi*, eds. Lilja Árnadóttir and Ketil Kiran (Oslo: Norsk Institutt for Kulturminnesforskning NIKU, and Reykjavík: Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, 1997), 97, and Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum á 15. öld,” *Gripla* 22 (2016): 157–59.

Without challenging these claims, this article approaches law manuscripts from the fifteenth century from the perspective of “Material Philology,”⁵ and argues for unrestrained processes of textual compilation strategies, as well as ongoing usage of iconographic and stylistic models known from Icelandic manuscripts produced in previous centuries.⁶ Accordingly, this article discusses several cross-disciplinary features: the adaptation and recompilation of both secular and ecclesiastical legal textual patterns, *mise en pages*, book painting, and changes in codicological production units.⁷ In addition, select manuscripts will be discussed in relation to contemporary medieval social, economic, and religious changes. In Icelandic historiography, the second and third quarters of the fifteenth century are known for the “Enska öldin;” a period named after the Icelandic-English stockfish-trade,⁸ which also allowed for some administrative independence from Danish sovereignty.⁹

Medieval Icelandic law manuscripts predominantly feature the late thirteenth-century law code *Jónsbók*. In 1281, the Norwegian King Magnús

- 5 “Material Philology” calls for interdisciplinary and holistic approaches to the study of manuscripts. For this, see Stephen Nichols, “Why Material Philology?,” *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie*, 116 (1997): 10–30. For discussions on Material Philology in Old Norse research, see Lena Rohrbach, “I.14, Material Philology,” *Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann and Stephen A. Mitchell (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 210–19.
- 6 For examples, see Patricia Pires Boulhosa, “Layout and Structure of the Text in Konungsbók,” *The Power of the Book. Medial Approaches to Medieval Nordic Legal Manuscripts*, ed. Lena Rohrbach (Berlin: Nordeuropa Institut, 2014), 75–98; Lena Rohrbach, “Matrix of the Law? A Material Study of the Text of Konungsbók,” *The Power of the Book. Medial Approaches to Medieval Nordic Legal Manuscripts*, ed. Lena Rohrbach (Berlin: Nordeuropa Institut, 2014), 99–128, and Lena Rohrbach, “Repositioning *Jónsbók*: Rearrangements of the Law in Fourteenth-Century Iceland,” *Legislation and State Formation: Norway and Its Neighbours in the Middle Ages*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir, 2013), 183–209.
- 7 For manuscript production units, see Peter J. Gumbert, “Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex,” *Il codice miscellaneo. Tipologie e funzioni. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Cassino, 14–17 maggio 2003*, eds. Edoardo Crisci and Oronzo Pecare (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 17–42, and Erik Kwakkel, “Towards a Terminology for the Analysis of Composite Manuscripts,” *Gazette du livre médiéval* 41 (2002): 12–19.
- 8 Björn Þorsteinsson, *Enska öldin í sögu Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1970), 94–163.
- 9 Björn Þorsteinsson, “Íslands- og Grænlandssiglingar Englendinga á 15. öld og fundur Norður-Ameríku,” *Saga* 5 (1965): 32. For a summary of the research on “Enska öldin,” see Baldur Þórhallsson and Þorsteinn Kristinsson, “Iceland’s External Affairs from 1400 to the Reformation,” *Icelandic Review of Politics and Administration* 9/1 (2013): 113–37.

Hákonarson *lagabætir* (Law-Mender; 1238–80) posthumously introduced *Jónsbók* to Iceland,¹⁰ a tributary of Norway since 1262–64, after its predecessor named *Járnsíða* was introduced partially in 1271, and fully in 1273, but never completely accepted.¹¹ *Jónsbók* was revised via three *Réttarbætr* (law amendments) issued in 1294, 1305, and 1314 by King Eiríkr Magnússon (1268–99) and King Hákon Magnússon (1270–1319) that cleared up eighty-eight disputatious sections. Although these revisions differ in length and detail, they were originally added after the main text in the so-called I-redaction of *Jónsbók*. During the fourteenth century, with AM 343 fol. (*Svalbarðsbók*) from c. 1330–40 and AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*) from 1363 recognised as the oldest witnesses,¹² the II-redaction features most of these revisions incorporated into the main text of the law code. Nevertheless, the II-redaction shares many similarities with manuscripts of the older, uninterpolated I-redaction,¹³ and compilation strategies to copy or (re-) compile both redactions into new versions of the II-redaction remained a common feature of law writing in the fifteenth century. Law codices where the *Jónsbók* text incorporates more shorter sections into the main text of another redaction are perhaps best termed as “hybrid.” However, this term only holds true as long as stemmatic relations of *Jónsbók* texts are accepted for the whole transmission of the law code. Furthermore, it needs to be acknowledged that any extended version of *Jónsbók* is automatically referred to as part of the II-redaction. Accordingly, the same redaction gains more

- 10 Sigurður Línal, “Lögfesting *Jónsbókar* 1281,” *Tímarit lögfræðinga* 32 (1982): 182–95.
- 11 For the reception of *Járnsíða*, see Patricia Pires Boulhosa, “Narrative, Evidence and the Reception of *Járnsíða*,” *Sturla Þórðarson: Skald, Chieftain and Lawman*, eds. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 223–32.
- 12 For the dating of AM 343 fol. (*Svalbarðsbók*), see Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók: Kong Magnus Hakonssons Lovbog for Island vedtaget paa Altinget 1281 og Réttarbætr: De for Island givne Retterbøder af 1294, 1305 og 1314* (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1904), xli. For the dating of the oldest production unit of AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*), see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, I (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1889), 284–85.
- 13 Diagram 1 shows textual relations of *Jónsbók* between manuscripts and fragments until the beginning of the sixteenth century. The data used for the diagram is taken from Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xli–xlviii, Stefán Karlsson and Ólafur Halldórsson, “Rettelser,” *Jónsbók: Kong Magnus Hakonssons Lovbog for Island vedtaget paa Altinget 1281 og Réttarbætr: De for Island givne Retterbøder af 1294, 1305 og 1314*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, (Odense: Universitetsforlaget, 1970), x–xli, and Már Jónsson, “Textatengsl nokkurra elstu handrita *Jónsbókar*,” *Lindæla: Sigurður Línal sjötugur*, eds. Sigurður Línal and Garðar Gíslason (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2001), 373–89.

independent textual values from the I-redaction than hitherto suggested.¹⁴ For a better understanding, stemmatic relations of all manuscripts and fragments that contain (parts of) *Jónsbók* and that were written up to the end of the fifteenth century, see Diagram 1.

In contrast to law manuscripts from the fourteenth century, few legal codices from the following century can be connected to known workshops. Without doubt, this situation is connected with the high mortality rate of clerics during the Black Death in 1402–04 mentioned above,¹⁵ although it is unlikely that monastic scriptoria ceased to exist altogether. Rather, they seem to have worked side by side with secular workshops,¹⁶ and manuscripts produced at ecclesiastical institutions during the fourteenth century remained important textual sources for both Latin and vernacular literature after the Black Death.¹⁷ As is the case with *Skarðsbók*,¹⁸ law manuscripts

- 14 An example of further additions made to the II-redaction of *Jónsbók* is the so-called *Hirðsiðir* section, which appears first in AM 343 fol. (*Svalbarðsbók*). *Hirðsiðir* is a subsection added at the end of the second section of *Jónsbók*, *Kristindómsbálkr*, and which consists of thirteen chapters taken from the Norwegian court-law *Hirðskrá* and the Icelandic ecclesiastical law *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*. Similar to the inclusion of the three Iceland-specific *Réttarbætr*, the addition of sections of these laws is novel for its time, since both were only individually transmitted before. For this, see Stefan Drechsler, “Jón Halldórsson and Law Manuscripts of Western Iceland c. 1320–40,” *Dominican Resonances in Medieval Iceland: The Legacy of Bishop Jón Halldórsson of Skálholt*, eds. Gunnar Harðarson and Karl G. Johansson (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 133–36.
- 15 Gunnar Karlsson and Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, “Plágurnar miklu á Íslandi,” 19.
- 16 The separation of ecclesiastical and secular workshops in medieval and Early Modern Iceland was the topic of a long-running debate between Stefán Karlsson and Lars Lönnroth. For this, see Lars Lönnroth, “Tesen om de två kulturerna: Kritiska studier i den isländska sagaskrivningens sociala förutsättningar,” *Scripta Islandica* 15 (1964): 1–97; Lars Lönnroth, “Sponsors, Writers and Readers of Early Norse Literature,” *Two Norse-Icelandic Studies* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Universitet), 1–16; Stefán Karlsson, “Ritun Reykjarfjarðarbókar. Excursus: Bókagerð bænda,” *Opuscula* 4 (1970): 120–40; and Stefán Karlsson, “The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts,” *Saga-Book* 15/2 (1999): 138–58.
- 17 For monastic centres of writing in medieval Iceland, see Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Voru scriptoria í íslenskum klaustrum?” *Íslensk klausturmenning á miðöldum*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2016), 186–94.
- 18 AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*) features three production units: in the oldest unit on ff. 1–18 and ff. 24–350^a, which was written by a single scribe in the Augustinian monastery at Helgafell in western Iceland, it features the II-redaction of *Jónsbók*, the Norwegian court law *Hirðskrá*, and the Icelandic Church law *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*, as well as a large number of statutes, clauses for statutes, formulas, and *Réttarbætr*. During the fifteenth century, the complete gathering 4 (ff. 18–23) was written and added by a single scribe, adapting

produced in or near to ecclesiastical institutions in the fourteenth century, such as GKS 3269 b 4to and AM 168 b 4to from the wider network of the western Icelandic Augustinian Helgafell workshop,¹⁹ and AM 127 4to and GKS 3269 b 4to from the northern Icelandic Benedictine scriptorium at Þingeyrar,²⁰ were actively used in the fifteenth century, and comments of

the *mise en pages* of the older unit, and adding those sections of *Jónsbók* that were missing at that time. In the early sixteenth century, a table of contents, as well as further vernacular and Latin formulas were added on ff. 150vb–157v by several scribes. For the provenance and textual content of *Skarðsbók*, see Jakob Benediktsson, Introduction to *Skarðsbók: Jónsbók and Other Laws and Precepts*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1943), 11–15; Lena Rohrbach, “Repositioning *Jónsbók*,” and Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 63–72. For the dating of the second and third production units, see Ólafur Halldórsson, “*Skarðsbók* – uppruni og ferill,” *Skarðsbók: Codex Scardensis AM 350 fol.*, eds. Jónas Kristjánsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Sigurður Líndal (Reykjavík: Lögberg, 1981), 20, 23.

- 19 GKS 3269 b 4to was written in the wider network of the Augustinian monastery at Helgafell and consists today of three production units: ff. 1ra–62va21 was written in 1330–40 and features the I-redaction of *Jónsbók*. Ff. 62va22–66va was written in 1350–1400 and consists of (mainly) trade-related *Réttarbætr*, and f. 66vb from 1400–1500, which includes a unique redaction of the agreement *Gamli sáttmáli*. The fragmented codex AM 168 b 4to originates from the wider Helgafell network too, and was written in two steps: Ff. 1r–11v from 1360 contains *Kristinréttir Árna byskups*, and ff. 12r–15v from 1475–1500 features *Gamli sáttmáli*, a statute from 1479 by Bishop Magnús Eyjólfsson on ecclesiastical matters and a *Réttarbót* by King Magnús Erlingsson (1156–84) from 1163/64 written by the scribe and poet Bjarni Narfason, as well as a single text by a further scribe featuring the third general *Réttarbót* for Iceland from 1314. For their dating, see Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xli; Gustav Storm, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387*, IV (Christiania: Grøndahl & Søn, 1885), 408; Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, II (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1900), 72, and Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 445.
- 20 The oldest production unit of AM 127 4to on ff. 1v–98v was written in 1350 at the northern Icelandic Benedictine monastery at Þingeyrar by a single scribe. It features the I-redaction of *Jónsbók*, as well as the *Réttarbætr* from 1294, 1305, and 1314. During the fifteenth century, annotations were added to the margins of the *Jónsbók* text by several scribes. Finally, in 1450, a description of the land belonging to the farm at Höllustaðir (in Reykhólasveit or Húnavatnsþing) was added to f. 98vb9–16. Most parts of GKS 3269 b 4to on ff. 12va–87rb17 and ff. 87va–103vb were written in 1350 by the same scribe as AM 127 4to, and feature, besides *Jónsbók* and the two *Réttarbætr* from 1294 and 1305, the ecclesiastical *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*, as well as *Statuta Vilhjálms kardinála* from 17 August 1247 on holy days and the property of the Church. In 1498–1520, several scribes contributed to a list of bishops on F. 87rb18–25 from the northern Icelandic diocese of Hólar. In addition, ff. 1–11 feature material from the seventeenth century including a registry of *Jónsbók* and several oath formulas for lawmen. For their dating, see Alfred Jakobsen, *Studier i Clarus saga* (Bergen and Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), 46, 12; Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 416 and *Katalog*, II, 71; *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenskt fornbréfasafn*, V, ed. Jón Þorkelsson (Copenhagen and Reykjavík: S. L. Møller and Félagsprentsmiðja, 1899–1902), 81.

various sorts,²¹ as well as additional texts such as tables of contents, diplomatic material, statutes, and oath formulas for lawmen were added. Several known manuscript groups from the fifteenth century are related to secular workshops in northern Iceland, and, as will be discussed below, law manuscripts that belong to these groups indicate that textual models of *Jónsbók* circulated similarly as they had in the previous century.²² Simultaneously, the number of surviving manuscripts and fragments containing *Jónsbók* is similar to that of previous centuries: thirty-one manuscripts and twenty-three fragments are known from the fifteenth century, which is about the same as the previous 120 years.²³

As indicated in Diagram 1, the renewal and rewriting of the uninterpolated *Jónsbók* text does not end with the fourteenth century, and a number of manuscripts known from the fifteenth century show the work of compilers who were equally skilled in the compilation of secular and ecclesiastical laws. Besides *Svalbarðsbók* and *Skarðsbók*, perhaps the most significant law manuscript that contains an interpolated II-redaction of *Jónsbók* is the somewhat understudied codex AM 136 4to (*Skinnastaðabók*). Written by a single scribe (b) (ff. 1v–143v) in 1480–1500,²⁴ the particularly small manuscript measuring 185 x 175 mm poorly mirrors the representative and highly illuminated character of the two law manuscripts from the fourteenth century with which it shares the same redaction. Nevertheless, the oldest production unit features a professional *mise en pages* consisting of one column with twenty-five lines throughout, with markedly small margins, and book painting with a number of Romanesque-ornamented large initials, and numerous, single-coloured Lombardic capitals with early Gothic *fleuronné* pen-flourishing to guide the reader through the law code. In addition, subsections of *Jónsbók* are indicated using Roman numerals and chapter headings in the margins, all written by the main scribe.

21 For marginalia in medieval Icelandic (and Norwegian) law manuscripts, see Stefan Drechsler, “Marginalia in Medieval Western Scandinavian Law Manuscripts,” *Das Mittelalter* 25/1 (2020): 180–95.

22 For fifteenth-century Icelandic workshops that also produced law manuscripts, see Stefán Karlsson, “The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts,” 141–42, 146–47, 152–55, with further references, and Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum á 15. öld,” 157–233.

23 Már Jónsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók. Lögþingur Íslendinga hver samþykkt var á alþingi árið 1578* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2004), 26.

24 Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xlvi.

Gathering	Text	Textual Content
1 (8; ff. 1–8) 2 (8; ff. 9–16) 3 (8; ff. 17–23) 4 (8; ff. 24–31) 5 (8; ff. 32–39) 6 (8; ff. 40–47) 7 (8; ff. 48–55) 8 (8; ff. 56–63) 9 (8; ff. 64–71) 10 (8; ff. 72–79) 11 (8; ff. 80–87)	<i>Máldagi</i> <i>Jónsbók</i>	Inventory and land ownings of the church at Hafrafellstunga I-redaction of <i>Jónsbók</i> , with all interpolations added
12 (8; ff. 88–95)	<i>Réttarbót Eiríks Magnússonar</i> from 1294	First general <i>Réttarbót</i> for Iceland
13 (8; ff. 96–103)	<i>Réttarbót Hákonar Magnússonar</i> from 1314	Third general <i>Réttarbót</i> for Iceland
	<i>Búalog</i>	Laws on domestic trade
	<i>Réttarbót Hákonar Magnússonar</i> from 1308/09	On the rights and obligations of clerics
	<i>De virtutibus et vitiis</i> by Alkuin (transl.) (excerpt)	On anger as a cardinal sin
	<i>Réttarbót Magnús Eiríkssonar</i> from 1353	On wrong payments of tithe, and on obligations of Icelandic people to pay the same fees to the kings' men as to the king himself
	<i>Kristinrétr Árna Þorlákssonar</i>	Ch. 35: On property belonging to deceased people
14 (8; ff. 104–11)	<i>Grágás</i> / <i>Vottorð Gizurar byskups</i> , from 1083	On the rights that King Óláfr <i>helgi</i> Haraldsson had given to the Icelanders in Norway

Scribe	Date	Length	Columns	Lines	Size
Hand a	1600 ¹	f. 1r	1	20	185x175 mm
Hand b	1480–1500 ²	ff. 1v–95r18			
		ff. 95r19–97r23			
		ff. 97r24–99v1			
		ff. 99v2–101r7			
		ff. 101r8–102r9			
		ff. 102r10–103r15			
		f. 103r16–v13			
		ff. 103v13–104r22			
		ff. 104r23–105r20			

¹ Kristian Kálund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

² Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xlvii

Gathering	Text	Textual Content
	<i>Samþykkt Hákonar Magnússonar ok Íslendinga</i> , from 1303	Renewal of the <i>Gamli sáttmáli</i>
	Formulas	Vernacular legal formulas
	Formulas	Vernacular legal formulas
15 (8; ff. 112–19)	<i>Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar</i>	Ch. 27–28: On the property of the Church and on holy days
16 (8; ff. 120–127)	Formulas	Vernacular legal formulas
	<i>Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar</i>	Ch. 1–26, 29–34
	<i>Skipan Eilífs erkibyskups hin þriðja</i> , from 1320 (Beginning)	On pastoral policy
16 (8; ff. 120–127)	<i>Skipan Magnús byskups Gizurarsonar</i> , from 1224	On Church services
	<i>Skipan Árna byskups Þorlákssonar</i> , from 1269 (shortened)	Confirming the statute by Bishop Magnús Gizurarson from 1224
	<i>Skipan Árna byskups Þorlákssonar</i> , from 1275	On orders regarding fasting which are not covered in the Christian laws
	<i>Skipan Árna byskups Þorlákssonar</i> , from 1292	On marriage ceremonies, ceremonies, and ceremonies for women
	<i>Skipan Árna byskups Þorlákssonar</i> , from 1280	On tithe, cohabitation, St Peter's duty, and tithe for the bishop
	<i>Skipan Eilífs erkibyskups hin þriðja</i> , from 1320 (End)	On pastoral policy
	<i>Skipan Eilífs erkibyskups hin fyrsta</i> , from 1320	On pastoral policy
	<i>Skipan Gyrðs byskups Ívars-sonar</i> , from 1359	On light duty, ordinances on hay tolls, mass vestments, treasures of priests, and on priests acting in their dress codes (among others)
	<i>Skipan Jóns byskups Sigurðarsonar</i> , from 1345	Confirming and renewing statutes by archbishops and former bishops
	<i>Skipan Jóns byskups Halldórs-sonar</i> , from 1326	On excommunication

Scribe	Date	Length	Columns	Lines	Size
		f. 105r20-v24			
		ff. 105v24-106v13			
		ff. 106v14-108r6			
		f. 108r7-21			
		ff. 108r22-109v7			
		ff. 109v8-126v15			
		ff. 126v16-131v9			
		ff. 131v10-132r19			
		ff. 132r20-133r12			
		f. 133r12-v2			
		f. 133v2-21			
		ff. 133v21-134r18			
		ff. 134r19-135r14			
		ff. 135r14-v19			
		ff. 135v20-136v7			
		ff. 136v8-137v10			
		ff. 137v11-140v3			

Gathering	Text	Textual Content
	<i>Skipan Pétrs Hólabyskups</i> , from 1391	On light duty, maternity leave, and funeral allowance (among others)
	<i>Skipan Gyrðs byskups Ívarssonar</i> , from 1354	On sermons, church riots, concubines of priests, prayer houses, food donations, and redemption
	<i>Skipan Jóns erkibyskups</i> , from 1280 (short redaction)	On pastoral policy
	<i>Statuta Vilhjálms kardinála</i> , from 1247 (fragmented)	On holy days and the property of the Church
Add. leaves (7; ff. 144–47)	<i>Lilja</i>	Beginning of a verse of the religious poem
	Formulas	Vernacular legal formula on a violent assault
	<i>Máldagi</i> (Beginning)	Inventory and land ownings of the church at Hafrafellstunga
	<i>Bréf um vinnufólk og vermen</i> , from 1404	A resolution made at the Alþing in 1404 on workers and fishermen
	<i>Máldagi</i> (End)	Inventory and land ownings of the church at Hafrafellstunga
	<i>Nöfn rúnastafanna</i>	A number of names of rune staves
	<i>Réttarbót Hákonar Magnússonar</i> , from 1308/9	On the rights and obligations of clerics
	<i>Réttarbót Hákonar Magnússonar</i> , from 1316	On the application of the older Christian law
	<i>Statuta Vilhjálms kardinála</i> , from 1247 (fragmented)	On holy days and the property of the Church
	<i>Áminning um dóma</i>	A short reminder for lawmen

Scribe	Date	Length	Columns	Lines	Size
		ff. 140v3–141r2			
		f. 141r3–r18			
		ff. 141r18–143r19			
		f. 143r20–v			
Hand c	1500 ³	f. 144r1–2	Various	Various	
Hand d	1500 ⁴	f. 144r3–5			
Hand e	1500 ⁵	f. 144rb6–33			
Hand f	1570 ⁶	f. 144v1–15			
Hand e	1500 ⁷	f. 144va16–36			
Hand g	1500–1600 ⁸	f. 144vb			
Hand h	1480 ⁹	f. 145r1–v11	1	26–27	
		ff. 145v12–146r6			
		f. 146r9–27			
Hand i	1500–1600 ¹⁰	f. 147r		21	

3 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

4 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

5 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

6 *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, II, ed. Jón Þorkelsson, 364.

7 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

8 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

9 *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, II, ed. Jón Þorkelsson, 364

10 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

Skinnastaðabók features a unique version of *Jónsbók*, which consists of a core text of the I-redaction as found in AM 169 4to from c. 1300–50.²⁵ Nevertheless, further textual models were also used, which stem from as yet unidentified sources.²⁶ In Skinnastaðabók, all revisions to *Jónsbók* as listed in the three named *Réttarbætr* were added to the law text. The addition of these revisions is itself particular, as this is barely found in earlier manuscripts of the same redaction, and may be explained by a thorough expertise in the matter on the part of the reviser.²⁷ As shown in Table 1, the text of Skinnastaðabók separates secular and ecclesiastical topics, similar to what is the case with the textual content of Skarðsbók.²⁸ For example, *Jónsbók* is followed by two of the three general *Réttarbætr* for Iceland as individual texts and *Búalög*, which is a collection of laws related to farming and domestic trade, dated to c. 1400.²⁹ In contrast, the following sections of Skinnastaðabók indicate a clerical perspective, a thematic separation which is indeed known from Skarðsbók as well.³⁰ In general, clerical texts featured in Skinnastaðabók refer to common topics of contemporary medieval Church politics, yet they signify an experienced compiler. This is exemplified by the featured thirteenth-century Icelandic ecclesiastical law *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*, which is separated into interspersed sections that include a number of statutes regulating various issues concerning the work and private life of priests. Although the content of the ecclesiastical part in Skinnastaðabók seems vast, it follows a coherent structure. For example, ff. 131v10–133r12 features *Skipan Magnús byskups Gizurarsonar* from

25 For the dating of the production unit of AM 169 4to that features *Jónsbók*, see Kristian Kálund, *Katalog*, I, 445, and Peter Foote pers. 1988.

26 Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xlvi.

27 Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xlii–xlii. A manuscript example, where not all revisions were added to the main text, is the earliest known example from the II-redaction, AM 343 fol. (*Svalbarðsbók*). Instead, in *Svalbarðsbók* some sections of the *Réttarbætr* were added in the margins by later users. The omission of these amendments to *Jónsbók* does not indicate they were compiled less meticulously. On the contrary, often they appear to have been designed for specific use which does not need the inclusion of all *Réttarbætr*. This is seen in the way the selection of further texts is organised and written.

28 For the textual content of AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*), see the references given in note 19 above.

29 *Búalög: Verðlag á Íslandi á 12–19. öld*, ed by Arnór Sigurjónsson. Reykjavík: Framleiðsluráð 1966.

30 For the textual content and structure of AM 350 fol. (*Skarðsbók*), see the references given in Footnote 13.

1224 which defines several aspects of Church services and is followed by a shortened redaction of *Skipan Árna byskups Þorlákssonar* from 1269, which confirms the status of the previous statute, and further extends its content. Both statutes, as well as a number of others, are incorporated into the large *Skipan Eilífs erkibyskups hin þriðja* from 1320, of which the first two-thirds is found at the end of *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*, and the last third after all four statutes by Árni Þorláksson (1237–98), bishop of Skálholt in 1269–98 and one of the most important reformers of Church administration in medieval Iceland. Like the two *Réttarbætr* for Iceland added after *Jónsbók*, the ecclesiastical part of *Skinnastaðabók* also ends with a statute already incorporated into a larger text (*Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*), *Statuta Vilbjálms kardinála*. Overall, the combination of a number of statutes together with *Skipan Eilífs erkibyskups hin þriðja* is found too in AM 347 fol. (Belgsdalsbók), which was produced in three distinctive stages in c. 1350–70.³¹ In addition to Belgsdalsbók, *Skinnastaðabók* also features – along with *Jónsbók* and *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar* – a number of vernacular ecclesiastical law texts that are uniquely arranged and combined in the codex.³²

Today, *Skinnastaðabók* contains four further leaves on ff. 144–47 with various contents. The first of these is perhaps best described as a miscellany,³³ since it contains parts of a stanza from the religious Old Norse poem *Lilja*; an oath formula for lawmen on violence; an inventory and list of homesteads that belong to the northern Icelandic church at Hafrafellstunga;³⁴ and a resolution made at the Alþing in 1404 on workers and fishermen; as well as a list of names of rune staves. These texts were written by five scribes (c, d, e, f, g) throughout the sixteenth century.³⁵ The

31 Stefán Karlsson, “Lovskriver i to lande: Codex Hardenbergensis og Codex Belgsdalensis,” *Festskrift til Alfred Jakobsen*, eds. Jan Ragnar Hagland, Jan Terje Faarlund and Jarle Rønhovd (Trondheim: Tapir, 1987), 167, 179.

32 For the textual content of AM 347 fol. (Belgsdalsbók), see Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland*, 131–33, with further references.

33 For this term in the context of medieval manuscripts, see Arthur Bahr, “Miscellaneity and Variance in the Medieval Book,” *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, eds. Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 181–98.

34 *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, X, ed. Jón Þorkelsson (Reykjavík: Félagsprentsmiðja, 1911–21), 56–57.

35 *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, II, ed. Jón Þorkelsson (Copenhagen: Møller and Thomsen, 1893), 364; Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

following two leaves, on the other hand, were written by a single scribe (h) contemporaneously with the main production unit of Skinnastaðabók. They contain three *Réttarbætr* by King Hákon Magnússon from the early fourteenth century on largely ecclesiastical matters. Although they contain a somewhat similar *mise en pages* as the initial production unit, they were perhaps not intended to be used together with it.³⁶ Finally, the somewhat smudged leaf f. 147 features on the verso side a short vernacular reminder for lawmen. It remains unknown whether any of these leaves are connected to the original production of Skinnastaðabók, although an inventory and list of homesteads of the church at Hafrafellstunga, written by another scribe (a) in 1600 on f. 1r³⁷ indicates shared use of the original manuscript and some of these single leaves by that time.

No separation of the texts is indicated in the gathering structure of the original codex, and due to the constant and fluent *mise en pages*, it is likely that Skinnastaðabók was compiled and written in one place by one compiler. Jón Þorkelsson has argued that Skinnastaðabók was written in Norður-Þingeyjarsýsla for Finnbogi Jónsson í Ási í Kelduhverfi, near to the church at Hafrafellstunga, and that it remained in the possession of his family for three generations.³⁸ Finnbogi was *logmaðr* in the north and west of Iceland in 1484–1508, and, according to Páll Eggert Ólason, most of the sons of Finnbogi were *logmenn*, too.³⁹ The legal background of Finnbogi and his family⁴⁰ and the thorough way in which the *Jónsbók*

36 Although use of AM 136 4to (Skinnastaðabók) related to an unknown priest at the church at Hafrafellstunga seems to be fitting, the leaves ff. 145–46 nevertheless seem to have served as additions for modular use only; this is indicated in the final, now fragmented text of f. 146, which contains *Statuta Vilhjálms kardinála* from 1247, as well as one of the three *Réttarbætr* from 1308/09, which defines the rights and obligations of priests, and which is also already to be found earlier in the codex.

37 Kristian Kálund, *Katalog*, I, 425.

38 *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, I, ed. Jón Þorkelsson, 67–68.

39 Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, II (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1949), 7–8.

40 It is worth noting that Jón (died 1546), one of the sons of Finnbogi, was priest at the church at Múli in 1491–1524 and was simultaneously *officialis* of the nearby Augustinian house of canons regular at Möðruvellir in 1520–22 until he became its last prior in 1524–46. It is indeed not unlikely that at least some of the statutes used for Skinnastaðabók were borrowed from that monastery. For Jón Finnbogason, see Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, III (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1950), 110–11.

and *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar* texts and the statutes are compiled indicates that it is not unlikely that the codex was indeed written for him or a direct member of his family and was soon after used at the church at Hafrafellstunga. Nevertheless, it remains a conjecture whether Skinnastaðabók was written for Finnbogi directly as there is no indication in the oldest production unit to suggest that it was used by him or any members of his family. At the time the single leaves on ff. 144–147 were written, the two inventories of the rich church at Hafrafellstunga were added, a church which did in fact come into the possession of the family of Finnbogi during that time.⁴¹ Considering the focus of the manuscript text on ecclesiastical and select secular matters, it is likely that Skinnastaðabók was used at a church with a considerable number of land possessions, such as the one at Hafrafellstunga.

Like the modes of textual (re-)compilation of Skinnastaðabók that mirror the production of fourteenth-century law manuscripts such as Skarðsbók and Belgdalsbók, the overall modes of production of Icelandic law manuscripts did not change significantly during the fifteenth century. Perhaps most surprisingly, this is illustrated in the prolonged use of Gothic book script in many of the law manuscripts from the fifteenth century (for examples, see Figure 1 and Figure 5). Generally, book script is most commonly used in Icelandic manuscripts during the thirteenth and especially fourteenth century, yielding to a more constant use of Gothic hybrid/charter script in the following century.⁴² Although a number of scribes are known to have written both charters and law manuscripts in charter script in the fifteenth century,⁴³ the influence of clearly defined charter script appears less frequent in the law manuscripts than in codices featuring other kinds of vernacular literature. Apart from related scribal training, an explanation may be found in the use of the textual models that were generally written in the same script type (for examples, see Figure 2 and Figure

41 Karl Axelsson, Allan V. Magnússon and Benedikt Bogason, “Úrskurður óbyggðanefndar: Mál nr. 5/2005 Óxarfjarðarhreppur,” *Óbyggðanefnd* (29. maí 2007), 24–25. See https://obyggdanefnd.is/wp-content/uploads/05_2005-5_urskurdur.pdf [Accessed 10.4.2021].

42 Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Manuscripts and Palaeography,” *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 254–55; and Stefán Karlsson, “The Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” 836.

43 Stefán Karlsson, “The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts,” 146–49, 152–55.

4). Nevertheless, an adaptation of similar *mise en pages* barely took place during the writing process,⁴⁴ even if the general manuscript design seems to have remained the same for all kinds of vernacular literature,⁴⁵ and the overall size of law manuscripts did not change significantly.⁴⁶

As with the *mise en pages*, changes in book painting are few. Overall, both the quantity and quality of illuminations found in law manuscripts from the fifteenth century are inferior to those known from the previous century.⁴⁷ While the fourteenth century saw a rise of internationally inspired book paintings,⁴⁸ undoubtedly a side effect of the economic and ecclesiastical networks of the “Norska öldin” (mainly) during the first half of the fourteenth century,⁴⁹ few of these historical developments survived the first wave of the Black Death. On the contrary, iconographic and stylistic models used for illuminations in Icelandic law manuscripts from the fif-

- 44 This is exemplified in several manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that contain *Jónsbók* texts closely related to the respective texts in AM 350 fol. (Skarðsbók) and AM 343 fol. (Svalbarðsbók). For two examples from the fourteenth century, see Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland*, 92–97, 153–54. As for the fifteenth century, AM 148 4to and AM 138 4to from c. 1500 are suitable examples: although the *Jónsbók* text in these codices is particularly close to that in Skarðsbók, they feature different *mise en pages* and book paintings. For their dating, see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 432, and Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xlvii.
- 45 This is indicated in the number of columns, space for rubrics and initials, methods of ruling, and use of top lines for writing. For this, see Már Jónsson, “Manuscript Design in Medieval Iceland,” 237–38, and Már Jónsson, The Size of Medieval Icelandic Legal Manuscripts,” *The Power of the Book. Medial Approaches to Medieval Nordic Legal Manuscripts*, ed. Lena Rohrbach (Berlin: Nordeuropa Institut, 2014), 25–38.
- 46 Már Jónsson, “The Size of Medieval Icelandic Legal Manuscripts,” 31–33.
- 47 Halldór Hermannsson, Introduction to *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Jónsbók*, 14–15.
- 48 For examples of internationally inspired illuminations in Icelandic law manuscripts from the fourteenth century, see Lena Liepe, *Studies in Icelandic Fourteenth Century Book Painting* (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2009), 177–82; Stefan Drechsler, “The Illuminated Þjófabálkr in Fourteenth-Century Icelandic *Jónsbók* Manuscripts,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12 (2016): 1–40; and Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland*.
- 49 For “Norska öldin,” see Björn Þorsteinsson and Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Norska öldin,” *Saga Íslands*, IV, ed. Sigurður Línal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag and Sögufélagið, 1989), 61–258. In addition to rising economic activities in Iceland due to trade with *vaðmál* and stockfish during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a large number of Icelandic fragments and manuscripts have been identified to have been written for Norwegian export. For these, see Ólafur Halldórsson, “Flutningur handrita milli Íslands og Noregs fyrr á öldum,” *Tíminn* 49 (17 June 1965), 8–9; and Stefán Karlsson, “Íslandsk bogekspört til Norge i middelalderen,” *Maal og Minne* (1979): 1–17.

teenth century feature no significant influences from abroad. At the same time, illuminators reuse said motifs in partly new ways, which resemble the working practices of illuminators of the previous century.⁵⁰ The best example of this practice is perhaps the manuscript AM 132 4to from 1450–75,⁵¹ which shares a number of ornamental models with Skarðsbók and Svalbarðsbók, but it has no textual relation to any of them. On the contrary, AM 132 4to features a version of the uninterpolated I-redaction of *Jónsbók*, which, to some degree, shares a textual model with the law manuscript AM 347 fol. (Belgsdalsbók). Since Belgsdalsbók was written in the same cultural sphere as Skarðsbók and Svalbarðsbók in western Iceland in c. 1350–70, it is likely that similar textual models and sketch books were used at the site of production of AM 132 4to. Accordingly, the Romanesque ornamentation and overall design of the main initials of AM 132 4to are clearly inspired by Skarðsbók (Figures 1–2), while the ornamentation of select main initials has models in common with Svalbarðsbók (Figures 3–4). Like many illuminated law manuscripts from the fourteenth century, Skarðsbók usually features initials painted in two different forms of stepped gables: irregular stepped gable forms in dark and light red, and a stylised, mirrored vine leaf or acanthus frieze, filled in with green alongside light and dark red colours. All of this is found in a number of Icelandic law manuscripts from the fifteenth century, too, such as AM 354 fol. (Skálholtsbók yngri), AM 39 8vo, and AM 138 4to, which features a direct copy of the *Jónsbók* text of Skarðsbók, while Skálholtsbók yngri is considered a copy of Svalbarðsbók.⁵² AM 138 4to shares close ornamental and zoomorphic models with the codex AM 227 fol., suggesting that the book painting was most likely directly copied from it (Figure 5–6).⁵³ The text of AM 227 fol. consists of two major sections of the Old Norse version of (parts of) the Old Testament, *Stjórn*, and includes a par-

50 For examples of the working modes of illuminators in the fourteenth century, see Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Introduction,” *Íslenska teiknibókin* (Reykjavík: Crymogea, 2013), 29–39.

51 For the dating of AM 132 4to, see Christopher Sanders, “Introduction,” *Manuscripta Nordica. Early Nordic Manuscript in Digital Facsimile, I: Tales of Knights: Perg. fol. nr 7 in the Royal Library, Stockholm* (Copenhagen: Reitzels Forlag, 2000), 43–44.

52 Ólafur Halldórsson, “Introduction,” *Jónsbók*, xlv, xlvii.

53 Nothing is known about the production of AM 138 4to. For a summary of its content, see Bengt Chr. Jacobsen, “Håndskriftet AM 138 4to (Samtingingur),” *Gripla* 8 (1993): 279–80, with further references.



Figure 1: AM 132 4to, f. 5r: Jónsbók. 1450–75. Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum. Image: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.



Figure 2: AM 350 fol. (Skarðsbók), f. 55r: Jónsbók. 1363. Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum. Image: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.



Figure 3: AM 132 4to, f. 5r (Detail):
 Jónsbók. 1450–75. Reykjavík, Stofnun
 Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum.
 Image: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.



Figure 4: AM 343 fol. (Svalbarðsbók)
 (Detail), f. 33r: Jónsbók. 1330–40.
 Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar
 í íslenskum fræðum. Image: Jóhanna
 Ólafsdóttir.

ticularly fine book painting.⁵⁴ It was most likely produced at the northern Icelandic Benedictine monastery at Þingeyrar in c. 1350.⁵⁵

As mentioned above, workshops responsible for illuminated law manuscripts produced in the fifteenth century are largely unknown. One exception has been investigated by Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir and Stefán Karlsson,⁵⁶ who have argued that the complex law codex AM 351 fol. (Skálholtsbók eldri) from c. 1400–50 features illuminations and rubrics related to the law codex AM 151 4to from 1450–1500,⁵⁷ as well as the book painting of AM 39 8vo, all of which were most likely written by two brothers sharing the same name, Jón Þorláksson, from Skarð á Skarðströnd at Breiðafjörður, and Bolungarvík in the Westfjords.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, all of these three codices feature versions of *Jónsbók* that were compiled somewhat individually and,⁵⁹ apart from their scribal similarities, they bear few

54 For the textual content of AM 227 fol., see Jakob Benediktsson, “Some Observations on Stjórn and the Manuscript AM 227 fol.,” *Gripla* 15 (2004): 7–42, and for its book painting, Selma Jónsdóttir, *Lýsingar í Stjórnarhandriti* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1971) and Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Handritalýsingar í benediktínaklaustrinu á Þingeyrum,” *Íslensk klausturmenning á miðöldum*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2016), 227–311.

55 For the dating of AM 277 fol., see Alfred Jakobsen, *Studier i Clarus saga*, 46, 12.

56 Stefán Karlsson, “Skinnræmur úr Skálholtsbók (AM 351 fol.),” *Gripla* 3 (1979): 124–27; Stefán Karlsson, “Hauksnautur. Uppruni og ferill lögbókar,” *Sólhvarfasumbl saman borið handa Þorleifi Hauksyni fimmtugum 21. desember 1991*, ed. Gísli Sigurðsson (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 1992), 62–66; Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum á 15. öld,” 157–233.

57 For the dating of AM 151 4to, see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 434, and *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenskt fornbréfasafn*, I, ed. Jón Þorkelsson (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1857–76), 677.

58 For the two scribes sharing the same name, see Ólafur Halldórsson, “Jónar tveir Þorlákssonar,” *Afmælisrit til Dr. phil. Steingríms J. Þorsteinssonar 2. júlí 1971*, ed. Aðalgeir Kristjánsson (Reykjavík: Leiftur, 1971), 128–44. For the manuscripts that belong to the workshop at which AM 351 fol. (Skálholtsbók eldri), AM 151 4to and AM 39 8vo were produced, see Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum á 15. öld,” 171.

59 According to Ólafur Halldórsson, Introduction to *Jónsbók*, xli, xlii, xlv, AM 51 4to shares to some degree a similar textual model of the I-redaction of *Jónsbók* with AM 351 fol. (Skálholtsbók eldri), and the codex AM 168 a 4to from c. 1360. Nevertheless, AM 151 4to features most of the interpolations known from the II-redaction, too, with close affinities with AM 350 fol. (Skarðsbók). AM 39 8vo, on the other hand, is a loose copy of the codex AM 344 fol., which was produced in c. 1375–1400 at the wider surrounding of the Benedictine nunnery of Reynistaður and the nearby secular farm of Akrar. For the dating of AM 168 a 4to, see Ólafur Halldórsson, “Introduction,” *Jónsbók*, xli, and for AM 344 fol., Stefán Karlsson, “Introduction,” *Íslandske Originaldiplomer indtil 1450: Tekst* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), xxxvii.



Figure 5: AM 138 4to, f. 14v (Detail):
Jónsbók. 1500. Reykjavík, Stofnun Arna
Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum.
Image: Sigurður Stefán Jónsson.



Figure 6: AM 227 fol., f. 38r (Detail):
Stjórn. 1350. Reykjavík, Stofnun Arna
Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum.
Image: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir.

resemblances as regard to their *mise en pages* and size. Either way, according to Guðbjörg, they have loose links to the yet unlocated workshop at which the C-painter of the famous Icelandic sketch book AM 673 a III 4to (Íslenska teiknibókin) worked.⁶⁰ Like other illuminators from the fifteenth century, the C-painter mainly draws on iconographic models known from previous centuries.⁶¹

In iconographic terms, much fewer law manuscripts illuminated in the fifteenth century feature text-related images than those in the previous century. While the use of iconographic images was well established during the fourteenth century for the guidance of the reader,⁶² it seems to have become less fashionable during the following century, perhaps due to the practice of adding tables of contents to a few older law codices, or due to the more constant use of the margins for annotations. It is likely that tables of contents and historiated book painting served similar purposes in the

60 For the C-painter of AM 673 a III 4to (Íslenska teiknibókin), see Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Introduction,” *Íslenska teiknibókin*, 45–61.

61 Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum á 15. öld,” 165–66.

62 Lena Rohrbach, “Die Fabrikation des Rechts. Implikationen medialer Ausformungen in west- und ostnordischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften,” *Á austrvega. Saga and East Scandinavia*, 2, eds. Agneta Ney, Henrik Williams and Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist (Gävle: Gävle University Press, 2009).

production and use of Scandinavian law manuscripts during the Middle Ages,⁶³ and a shared use of both forms of guidance as to the textual contents is only known from a few examples.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, established iconographic models can be found in manuscripts from before and after the two waves of the Black Death in the fifteenth century although a number of significant changes can be seen. An example may be the last section of *Jónsbók* entitled *Þjófabálkr*, which regulates the fines and forms of punishment for theft. It is usually depicted in two stages: while the prosecution is depicted in the inner field, the execution by hanging is shown in the margins.⁶⁵ This mirrors the well-known difference between those iconographic images depicted within an initial and those that are found in the margins.⁶⁶ In several law manuscripts such as AM 132 4to (f. 51r) and in the earlier AM 158 a 4to (f. 101r) and Thott 1280 fol. (f. 54r) from c. 1400,⁶⁷ the execution by hanging is shown within the initial and with no other images attached. However, in AM 151 4to, which contains a “hybrid” version of *Jónsbók*, the iconographic image in the inner field of the initial at the beginning of *Þjófabálkr* depicts a stooped, walking man with a stick in his hands. Although less frequent, this image has a closer connection to the text than the illuminations of the executions.⁶⁸ Other illuminations in sections of *Jónsbók*, such as in *Rekabálkr*, which defines the regulations related to goods washed ashore, also appear with no iconographic coherence, similar to depictions from the fourteenth

63 Lena Rohrbach, “Die Fabrikation des Rechts,” 807–15.

64 To my knowledge, two examples are known: the Icelandic codex AM 347 fol. (*Belgsdalsbók*) mentioned, and the Norwegian manuscript GKS 1154 fol. (*Codex Hardenbergianus*). According to Stefán Karlsson, “Lovskriver i to lande,” both manuscripts were mainly written by the same Icelandic scribe. For the tables of contents and book painting in these codices, see Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland*, 132–33, with further references, and Anna Catharina Horn, *Lov og tekst i middelalderen: Produksjon og resepsjon av Magnus Lagabøtes landslov* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Universitet, 2016), 239.

65 Stefan Drechsler, “The Illuminated *Þjófabálkr* in Fourteenth-Century Icelandic *Jónsbók* Manuscripts,” 1–40.

66 For this, see Michael Camille, *Images on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 11–55.

67 For the dating of AM 158 a 4to, see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, II, 439, and Stefán Karlsson, “Introduction,” *Íslandske Originaldiplomer indtil 1450: Tekst*, xlv, xli–xlii, xlvi–xlvii, and for Thott 1280 fol., see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, II, 325.

68 For this, see Stefan Drechsler, “The Illuminated *Þjófabálkr* in Fourteenth-Century Icelandic *Jónsbók* Manuscripts,” 7–16, with further references.

century. An example is the depiction in an initial in AM 132 4to (f. 38v) of a man cutting driftwood. While they are iconographically poorly related, images at the start of the same section in manuscripts from the fourteenth century seem to prefer to depict the cutting up of whales washed ashore, such as the mid-fourteenth-century law codex GKS 3269 a 4to, on f. 61r.⁶⁹ Although the content differs in the two manners of depiction, their iconography is equally well reflected in the text section of *Jónsbók*.⁷⁰ Accordingly, in the known instances, the working modes of illuminators of fifteenth-century law manuscripts did not deviate much from the practices of the previous century in Iceland.

What appears to start dominating the iconographic content of Icelandic law manuscripts in the fifteenth century are depictions of one of the spritual patrons of the law code, the king and Saint Óláfr *helgi* Haraldsson (995–1030),⁷¹ seated as *rex perpetuus Norvegiae* and thereby performing his known function as the major patron of the law code. Illuminations depicting Óláfr *helgi* appear at various sections of *Jónsbók*, as well as one further text. Examples are the depiction of the enthroned Óláfr *helgi* together with St Þorlákr at the beginning of the first major section of *Jónsbók*, *Þingfararbálkr*, in the named AM 351 fol. (Skálholtsbók eldri) on f. 2v;⁷² in miniatures set before *Jónsbók* in the codices AM 152 4to (f. 1v) and AM 132 4to (f. 1r);⁷³ and, finally, at the beginning of the court law *Hirðskrá*, in the codex AM 126 4to (f. 109v), dated to c. 1400.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the earliest iconographic link between Óláfr *helgi* and vernacular law texts in Icelandic manuscripts appears in two older law manuscripts, GKS 3268 4to (f. 2v) and AM 135 4to (*Arnarbælisbók*).⁷⁵ The most important of them is

69 For these, see Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland*.

70 For *Rekabálkr* in the II-redaction, see *Jónsbók*, ed. Már Jónsson, 199–207.

71 For an overview, see Friederike Richter, “Das Buch im Buch: Artefactual Philology in zwei sich überlagernden Schichten,” *From Text to Artefact. Studies in Honour of Anne Mette Hansen*, eds. Katarzyna Anna Kapitan, Beeke Stegmann and Seán D. Vrieland (Leeds: Kismet Press, 2019), 70.

72 For this, see Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, “Lýsingar í íslenskum handritum á 15. öld,” 189–93, and Stefan Drechsler, *Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland*, 230–32.

73 For the erased miniature in AM 132 4to, see Jens Eike Schnall, “Recht und Heil. Zu Kompilationsmustern in Handschriften der *Jónsbók*,” *Gripla* 16 (2005): 103.

74 For the dating of AM 126 4to, see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 416.

75 For the illumination in GKS 3268 4to, see Jens Eike Schnall, “Recht und Heil. Zu Kompilationsmustern in Handschriften der *Jónsbók*,” 92.

perhaps the ecclesiastical-oriented Arnarbælisbók from c. 1350,⁷⁶ where a miniature of the enthroned Bishop and Saint Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1133–93) next to *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar* is also found.⁷⁷ Like a number of legal codices mentioned above, Arnarbælisbók was partly extended during the fifteenth century,⁷⁸ which indicates both ongoing use and potential inspiration of the illumination for book painters. Nevertheless, it is first and foremost in the fifteenth century that iconographic images of Óláfr helgi appear more often, a trend that increased in the following century, and which is possibly already related to raised religious interests around the middle of the fifteenth century,⁷⁹ when international bishops served in the two dioceses of Iceland.⁸⁰ It is very likely that this trend mirrors the change in both domestic and international politics mentioned earlier: while texts related to Norwegian royal supremacy and trade such as the Norwegian court law *Hirðskrá*, or trade-related *Réttarbætr*, feature less often in law manuscripts produced in Iceland during the fifteenth century than they did in the previous century, the texts most used for domestic issues such as the *Búalög* appear more frequently.

On the other hand, statutes and concordats continue to be included just as regularly in these manuscripts. Undoubtedly, this indicates permanent and ongoing contact with the Norwegian Archdiocese of Niðaróss, to which the two dioceses of Iceland had belonged since its establishment in 1152/53. As exemplified above with the codex Skinnastaðabók, apart from the textual redactions of *Jónsbók*, changes in the selection of texts are seen in law manuscripts written in Icelandic during the fifteenth century. The decreasing secular influence on the Icelandic politics that “Enska öldin”

76 For the dating of the oldest production unit of AM 135 4to (Arnarbælisbók), see Jón Helgason, *Handritaspjall* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1958), 50. For the iconography of Óláfr helgi and the textual conception, see Jens Eike Schnall, “Recht und Heil. Zu Kompilationsmustern in Handschriften der Jónsbók,” 77–87.

77 Selma Jónsdóttir, “Biskupsmynd í Arnarbælisbók,” *Skirnir* 144 (1970): 111–14.

78 For the dating of the younger production units of AM 135 4to (Arnarbælisbók), see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 422, 424, and Jón Þorkelsson, Introduction to *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenskt fornbréfasafn*, I, xxii, and *Diplomatarium Islandicum, Íslenskt fornbréfasafn*, II, ed. Jón Þorkelsson, 299.

79 Baldur Þórhallsson and Þorsteinn Kristinsson, “Iceland’s External Affairs from 1400 to the Reformation,” 131.

80 Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga II. Fyrirlestir og ritgerðir um tímabilið 1262–1550* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1958), 158.

appeared to have, is not reflected in the ecclesiastical sphere. It is likely that the rising number of historiated illuminations depicting St Olav (of Niðaróss) may also be best seen in this light. Nevertheless, the lack of external influences on both style and iconography is surprising, since “Enska öldin” actually brought an increased interest in English art such as alabaster works,⁸¹ and the rising interest in iconographic depictions as seen in vernacular English law manuscripts from the fifteenth century would perhaps have provided Icelandic illuminators with new model books from the continent as well.⁸² Overall, however, with changing Scandinavian politics in the late fourteenth century, Icelandic law manuscripts were first and foremost written for, and inspired by, domestic productions. With the second wave of the Black Death in Iceland at the end of the fifteenth century and, somewhat simultaneously, the arrival of “Þýska öldin,”⁸³ and economic as well as cultural relations with German merchants and related products, Icelandic law manuscript production in the sixteenth century once again enjoyed new impulses from mainland Europe for the ongoing production of vernacular laws.⁸⁴

81 Bera Nordal, “Skrá um enskar alabastursmyndir frá miðöldum sem varðveist hafa á Íslandi,” *Árbók hins íslenszka fornleifafélags* (1985): 86–128.

82 For these, see Anthony Musson, “Ruling ‘Virtually’? Royal Images in Medieval English Law Books,” *Every Inch a King. Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, eds. Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 151–71, and for the *mise en pages*, Ruth Carroll, Matti Peikola, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liis Varila, Janne Skaffari, and Risto Hiltunen, “Pragmatics on the Page: Visual Text in Late Medieval English Books,” *European Journal of English Studies* 17/1 (2013): 54–71.

83 For “Þýska öldin,” see Björn Þorsteinsson and Bergsteinn Jónsson, *Íslandssaga til okkar daga* (Reykjavík: Sögufélag, 1991), 174–75.

84 For examples, see Halldór Hermannsson, “Introduction,” *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Jónsbók*, 15–18, and Friederike Richter, “Das Buch im Buch: Artefactual Philology in zwei sich überlagernden Schichten,” 67–82.

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AM 347 fol. (Belgsdalsbók)	AM 168 a 4to
AM 350 fol. (Skarðsbók)	AM 168 b 4to
AM 351 fol. (Skálholtsbók eldri)	AM 169 4to
AM 354 fol. (Skálholtsbók yngri)	AM 673 a 4to (Íslenska teiknibókin)
AM 126 4to	AM 39 8vo
AM 127 4to	
AM 132 4to	GKS 3268 4to
AM 135 4to (Arnarbælisbók)	GKS 3269 a 4to
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ÁGRIP

Íslenskar lögbækur frá fimmtánu öld

Efnisorð: Handritagerð, norræn lagamenning, íslenskar handritamyndir, *Jónsbók*, *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*, *Búalög*, Hafrafellstunga

Í þessari grein er fjallað um fjölda þverfaglegra þátta íslenskra lögbóka frá fimmtánu öld, sem geyma mikilvæga texta um veraldleg og kirkjuleg málefni á Íslandi á miðöldum, svo sem *Jónsbók* og *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*. Því er haldið fram að samfella hafi verið í lagaritun á Íslandi í kjölfar svartadauða 1402–04, og að vísbendingar um hana finnist í texta- og listrænum hlutum handritanna, sem og í para-textum sem fylgja lagatextunum á spássíum. Fjallað er um fjögur sérkennileg og þverfagleg einkenni (með áherslu á AM 136 4to, Skinnastaðabók): aðlögun og frekari þróun lagatexta sem rekja má til fyrri alda, sértækt umbrot sem skrifarar handritanna völdu, lýsingu handritanna og síðari athugasemdir og umræðu á spássíum um efni megintextans. Sú ályktun er dregin að í kjölfar breytinga á norrænum stjórnámálum seint á fjórtánu öld hafi íslensk lögbókarhandrit á fimmtánu öld fyrst og fremst verið skrifuð fyrir innanlandsmarkað og stuðst við innlendar fyrirmyndir. Textar sem tengjast yfirráðum Noregs og viðskiptum verða minna áberandi en textar sem tengjast innlendum málefnum verða tíðari en áður. Á hinn bóginn eru samþykktir og samhæfingar jafn algengar og í eldri handritum, sem bendir til áframhaldandi sambands við norska erkibiskupsdæmið í Niðarósi á fimmtánu öld.

SUMMARY

Law Manuscripts from Fifteenth Century Iceland

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This article discusses a number of interdisciplinary aspects of Icelandic law manuscripts, produced in the fifteenth century, which contain important vernacular legal codes dealing with secular and ecclesiastical matters in medieval Iceland, such as *Jónsbók* and *Kristinréttir Árna Þorlákssonar*. In this article, it is argued that a continuity of law manuscript production exists in Iceland following the Black Death in 1402–04; this is seen in several ways: indications are found in textual and artistic parts of the manuscripts, as well as in para-texts that accompany the law texts in the margins. With particular focus on the manuscript AM 136 4to (Skinnastaðabók), this article discusses four distinctive cross-disciplinary features of fifteenth-century Icelandic law manuscripts: the adaptation and further development of textual contents initially found in law manuscripts dating back to previous centuries, select types of layouts chosen by the initial scribes, the book

painting, and the use of the margins by later users and owners for comments and discussion on the textual content. The article concludes that with the changing Scandinavian politics in the late fourteenth century, Icelandic law manuscripts in the fifteenth century were first and foremost written for, and inspired by, domestic productions. While texts related to Norwegian royal supremacy and trade are rarely featured, the texts most used for domestic issues appear more frequently. On the other hand, statutes and concordats occur as regularly in these manuscripts as they do in earlier works, which indicates ongoing contact with the Norwegian Archdiocese of Niðaróss during the fifteenth century.

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